The Wand Company Ltd.

The Eleventh Doctor's Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote Control - Frequently-asked questions (FAQs) and their answers

The information below covers the majority of questions that customers ask us, but you (or your customers) are welcome to contact us directly if you have any other questions or concerns.

Email: sonic@thewandcompany.com

Look down the page or click on any question to find answers to your questions, plus more technical information, help and support for the Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote Control.

If you are thinking of buying a Sonic, then here are answers to some of the questions you might have before you make that important decision. If you have already bought a Sonic Screwdriver and need support to get it to work, or have other questions, then please see questions and answers No.s 23 - 33 below.

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1 Will the Sonic Screwdriver work with my equipment?

The Sonic Screwdriver is compatible with almost all makes of home audio-visual equipment around the world, such as TVs, DVD players, hi-fis and set-top boxes. Please note that the Sonic Screwdriver only works with infrared (IR) remote controls, not radio-frequency (RF) remotes, and that the Sonic Screwdriver is not compatible with Bang & Olufsen equipment.

2 Will the Sonic Screwdriver work in my country?

Yes, the Sonic Screwdriver uses a remote control learning chip that is made by an American Company and commonly used in standard universal learning remote controls all over the world. The Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote Control will work in North America.

3 Are there detailed instructions available for learning how to use the Sonic Screwdriver?

Yes, the Sonic Screwdriver comes with a detailed, illustrated manual, however there is additional information available on line at www.thewandcompany.com/sonicscrewdriver

4 Will the Sonic Screwdriver interfere with my other equipment?

No, the Sonic Screwdriver complies with Part 15 of the FCC rules. Operation is subject to the following two conditions: 1. This device may not cause harmful interference. 2. This device must accept interference received, including interference that may cause undesired operation.

5 What is the Sonic Screwdriver's range?

Depending on lighting conditions and battery condition, about 4 m to 5 m (4 to 5.5 yards)

6 Can the Sonic Screwdriver perform all functions of my remote control?

No, not really, the Sonic Screwdriver was not designed to be a replacement remote control. The Sonic Screwdriver can only learn a limited number of remote control codes. It has 13 gestures and three memory banks. A single remote control code (from any conventional remote control) can be programmed on to any one of the gestures in any one of the three memory banks. This means that the Sonic Screwdriver can store and play back up to 39 remote control codes.

Nevertheless, the Sonic Screwdriver's 39 remote control codes are plenty for you to have fun controlling several different devices around the home.

7 Is the Sonic Screwdriver easy to use?

Like any alien technology, it takes a bit of practice to master the Sonic Screwdriver. Some people seem to be natural Time Lords and can control their earthly devices straight away with the Sonic Screwdriver, but for most people, a few minutes of practice is required to get the hang of the different movement gestures.

In general the gestures are pretty straightforward, only requiring short, precise movements to perform, The Sonic Screwdriver is not recommended as a remote control for the elderly or infirm.

8 How long do I have to wait between each gesture?

The Sonic Screwdriver has an accelerometer in it and this needs about 0.25 second (250 ms) to register each gesture, so waiting about a quarter to half a second between each gesture should be fine.

9 Can I use the Sonic Screwdriver if I have lost my original remote?

No, the Sonic Screwdriver is a learning remote and you have to program it with remote control codes from your original remote controls.

10 What batteries does the Sonic Screwdriver use?

The Sonic Screwdriver uses two AAA-size alkaline batteries (LR03).

11 Does the Sonic Screwdriver come with batteries?

No, batteries are <u>not</u> included with the Sonic Screwdriver.

12 What tools do I need to change the batteries?

A number 1 Phillips (posidriv or cross-head) screwdriver will be needed to remove two small Phillips head screws before the two halves of the Sonic Screwdriver can be separated.

13 Do the clasps open?

No, due to cost and performance constraints, the clasps do not open. The main body of the Sonic Screwdriver is packed with electronics and this means that it was impossible to make the Sonic Screwdriver with its functionality at an affordable cost.

You might be interested to know that not all the original Doctor Who props actually used in the filming of Doctor Who have opening clasps. On the Doctor Who set, for any given scene, Matt Smith uses one of four different Sonic Screwdriver props – for practical reasons, two of these do not have opening clasps.

14 Is the Sonic Screwdriver an exact screen-accurate replica?

No, although the Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote Control (URC) is close to the real thing, it is not a fully accurate screen replica. There are detail differences between the Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote Control and the prop that is used on the TV show which help make the Sonic Screwdriver URC more manufacturable and considerably less expensive than the accurate replicas, which can cost as much as $4,000 US dollars.

The most noticeable differences are:

Tip material swirl. The Sonic Screwdriver URC tip is made from a solid translucent colour injection moulded polycarbonate. The colour is a close match to the prop, but does not have the original lighter swirling pattern in it.

The shape of the clasp assembly, and the upper and lower cage. The metallic parts are manufactured using a diecasting process rather than being individually hand machined, as a result the shape of the clasps, the upper and lower cage have been changed slightly to make them possible to cast.

The lack of brass rivets. As rivets were not needed in the Sonic Screwdriver URC design, to keep manufacturing costs down, brass rivet features were incorporated into the lower cage moulding.

Shape of the cover ring. The Sonic Screwdriver URC has to come apart so that the batteries can be changed. To avoid unsightly parting lines and fixing screws showing on the outside of the Sonic Screwdriver, the ideal place for this was in the middle, and the cover ring was used to hide the join. This provides an elegant solution but means that the cover ring has to taper less than this feature on the original prop.

The handle isn't made from leather. Due to cost constraints, the handle could not be made in leather. The real prop also has a protruding button which Matt Smith uses to make the tip glow. The Sonic Screwdriver URC does not have this button, because as it is never shown in the TV show we did not think that it was intended to be part of the overall look of the device.

There is no end cap with secret button. The end button of the Sonic Screwdriver URC is a key part of its operation and we considered that covering it with a cap would make it awkward to use, so the end cap was removed. As the button is also the power button and users may want to carry their Sonic Screwdriver in their pockets, the design was modified to make the end button flush with the handle end so as to avoid accidental pressing.

It is slightly lighter than the prop. Although the Sonic Screwdriver does feel nice and heavy in the hand, it is in fact lighter than the screen prop (218 g compared to around 283 g for the original prop). This is because the original is a

more solid construction, without the space inside to house the electronics and batteries.

15 Will the Sonic Screwdriver work on wood?

No, just like the real Sonic Screwdriver in the show, the Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote Control will not work on wood.

16 How many devices can I control?

Each gesture can have one remote control code from any remote control programmed on to it. There are 13 gestures and three memory banks, which means that in total there are 39 code storage addresses. These addresses can be shared out with different remote controls.

17 What is the Sonic Screwdriver made of?

To give the feel of the real Sonic Screwdriver, the Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote Control is made from a range of materials.

The main components are made from die cast zinc alloy which has been hand polished. For the silvery parts, the material has been enameled (for environmental protection) without any plating, for the copper parts, the die cast parts have been copper plated and then enamel coated for protection. Internally, the functional components are ABS, a tough engineering grade plastic. Externally, ABS has been used for the china looking handle part, thermo-plastic polyurethane (TPU) has been used for the soft-touch grip and polycarbonate has been used for the illuminated tip.

18 Is the Sonic Screwdriver officially licensed?

Yes, the Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote Control is an officially licensed replica of the BBC's Eleventh Doctor's Sonic Screwdriver from the TV series Doctor Who.

19 Will the Sonic Screwdrivers be numbered?

Yes and No. The vast majority of the Sonic Screwdrivers produced will not be numbered. However there will be a small number (the first 100 off the production line) of specially numbered products available as extra special give-aways for significant events, and competitions. For these products, the number will be laser etched on to the white handle part in 1.5mm high text on one of the facets.

20 Where is the Sonic Screwdriver made?

The Sonic Screwdriver has been designed in the UK and is manufactured in China.

21 Does the Sonic Screwdriver have any lead paint on it?

No.

22 Having trouble with the rotation gestures?

A common problem with the rotation gestures is turning the Sonic Screwdriver too fast, or drawing circles in the air. For the rotation gestures, you need to rotate the Sonic Screwdriver very slowly and smoothly one quarter-turn, keeping the tip steady, as if you were turning a volume knob. Once you've gone just over a quarter-turn, the Sonic Screwdriver will register the rotation and go into fine-resolution rotation mode, where it will register an event every 15 degrees - this allows you to control the volume with only small movements of your wrist.

23 Trouble with the flick gestures?

A common problem with the flick gestures is waving the Sonic Screwdriver around too vigorously or doing the opposite gesture at the beginning of your intended gesture. If you're having difficulty with the flick gestures, stop and hold the Sonic Screwdriver steady and horizontal for a couple of seconds before trying again.

A short, positive flick of the wrist is all that is needed, where the tip of the Sonic Screwdriver only moves a few centimetres (inches). Start the movement pointing slightly away from the device you are controlling and finish the gesture so the Sonic Screwdriver is pointing at the device.

24 Trouble with the tap gestures?

The Sonic Screwdriver should be held quite steady during the tap gestures. To get started with these gestures, you might find it easiest to hold the Sonic Screwdriver in one hand whilst tapping it on the knurled (criss-cross) areas with one or two fingers of the other hand.

If you want to use your index finger to do a tap, remember that the Sonic Screwdriver always knows which way is up so if you quickly rotate the Sonic Screwdriver so that your index finger is at the side on underneath the Sonic Screwdriver and then tap it, it will recognise this as a tap on the side or the bottom.

25 Having difficulty programming your Sonic Screwdriver?

If you are having trouble programming your Sonic Screwdriver, check the manual to make sure that you are entering programming mode correctly. To do this press the Sonic Screwdriver button three times quickly, holding the third press until the Sonic Screwdriver tells you that it is in programming mode. If you can already get in to programming mode but are having difficulty learning codes

from your remote, please check the following:

Check that the batteries in your original remote control are fresh.
Occasionally weak or used-up batteries in the original remote control might still have enough power in for it to work with the device it is controlling, but not enough to programme the Sonic Screwdriver.
Try varying the distance between the tip of the Sonic Screwdriver and the front of your remote during learning. Normally about 3 cm (1.5”) works best, but also try at 5cm (2”) or 1 cm (0.5”).

Try varying the duration of the button press on your original remote control.
Only a very short press is usually required. If you think you might be pressing the button for too long then reduce the press time. In some cases increasing the press time slightly up to about 0.5 seconds can help.

Check that your original remote isn’t an radio frequency remote control.
The Sonic Screwdriver is designed to work with almost all infrared remote controls but it will not work with radio frequency (RF) remotes. If your remote control works through walls (i.e. from another room), or can work even if the device you are controlling is hidden inside a cupboard or behind some furniture, then it is likely that it is an RF remote control. To test if your original remote control is RF, block the front of the remote with a cushion while trying to control the device it is used with. If it can still control it, then it is an RF remote control and the Sonic Screwdriver will not be able to learn its remote control codes.

Check that your cable or satellite box isn’t switched to RF remote control mode.
Some cable or satellite set-top boxes are able to be controlled by either infrared (IR) or radio frequency (RF). In this case make sure that your set-top box is switched to IR remote control.

26 The Sonic Screwdriver can change channel on my TV once, but repeated commands don't seem to work

There are a few TVs (and other devices) which use infra-red (IR) "toggle codes" - these alternate between two different codes each time you press the button on your normal remote control. This is intended to avoid multiple commands being executed accidentally if the IR beam is broken during transmission (for example by the cat or another person walking between the remote control and the TV).

So, the first time you press the "channel up" button (for example, though this may also applies to other buttons), it will send one IR code (let's call it "code A", which will repeat for as long as you hold the button down), but the next time you press the same button, it will send a second IR code (B). On the third press, you'll be back to the first code A again, and so on. The TV will action a channel change when it sees code A, but it won't change the channel again if another code A is received consecutively, but is instead waiting to receive code B before it'll

change channel in the same direction.

The Sonic Screwdriver can only learn the IR code it sees when the button is pressed once during Programming Mode, which will be either code A or code B. So, repeated gestures will send the same IR code each time, and that causes the problem you're experiencing.

Fortunately, there is a work-around:

An undocumented feature of the Sonic Screwdriver is that you can actually learn more than one remote control button onto each gesture (as a kind of macro) if you press two buttons in quick succession whilst the Sonic Screwdriver is glowing steadily green while in Programming Mode waiting to learn a code. This very useful feature can help you deal with toggle codes by learning a dummy code after each of the original toggle codes, in the following way:

While the Sonic Screwdriver's tip is glowing green and it is waiting for a code, first press the button on the original remote that you want to use (e.g. channel up) and then quickly press another button on the original remote control which has no effect (e.g. the yellow button on most TV remotes does nothing most of the time), then the Sonic Screwdriver will learn two IR codes (e.g A,X) onto that gesture.

Now when you perform repeated gestures for channel up (e.g. flick upwards), the TV will receive code A (to change the channel up), then code X (which will do nothing but make it forget that it had just received code A), then the next code A (on the next flick upwards) should cause the channel to change again as expected. It might take you a couple of attempts to get the timing right for learning the "macro" of two buttons onto each gesture, but it's not too difficult once you get the hang of it.

27 Need a long press to turn on the TV?

There are a few TVs (and other devices) which require a long button press to turn them on or off. The Sonic Screwdriver can replicate a long button press by use of its handle button. To do a long button press, double press the Sonic Screwdriver handle button, holding the button down for the second press.

There are three memory banks and one long button press code may be stored on the Sonic Screwdriver's double button press gesture in each memory bank.

28 Problems with Windows Media Centre?

If you find that Windows Media Center will only respond once to a given command from the Sonic Screwdriver and that repeated commands don't work, please take a look at the explanation and solution given here:

http://www.cepro.com/article/no_more_quirky_ir_for_media_center/

Unfortunately their link to Autonomic Home is out-of-date - the IR Debounce Utility file they refer to can be downloaded from here:

http://www.thewandcompany.com/support/IR_Debounce.zip

29 Is it possible to over-write the learned IR codes?

Yes, any code may be over-written with a new code at any time by the normal programming procedure.

30 Does taking the batteries out erase the programming?

No, the codes cannot be erased by removing the batteries. The Sonic Screwdriver will retain the remote control codes it has learned even if the batteries are removed for extended periods.

31 Is there a way to completely reset the Sonic Screwdriver?

Yes, you can perform a factory reset to erase all learned infra-red (IR) codes by pressing the button quickly 10 times when the Sonic Screwdriver is in Programming Mode. CAUTION: this action can not be undone.

32 None of these answers have helped me and I still have a problem. What should I do?

In the first instance contact the retailer that you bought the Sonic Screwdriver from. Our retailers have been carefully chosen and give excellent customer service. If you are still having problems after contacting the retailer, then please email sonic@thewandcompany.com, telling us where and when you purchased your Sonic Screwdriver and the exact nature of your problem and we will do our best to resolve it as quickly as possible.